Office of the Vice-President,
External Affairs
Travel Report for Nov/Dec 2015

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2 INTRODUCTION

My Fellow Councilors, Executives, and Student Members,

It is my pleasure to provide you with a travel report for the Office of the Vice-President, External Affairs for November and December 2015. These last two months have resulted in one of the most incredible expansions of networks, advocacy, and governmental/NGO relationship building this office has seen in recent times.

Outlined in this report are the three travel events undertaken by this Office to Boston, MA, Ottawa, ON, and Paris, FR, under the framework of various conferences/events. The outcomes from these trips will undoubtedly reap their societal benefits in the long term but we can already see the influence of such factoring into the (soon-to-be-released) broadway campaign and other profile work that will be undertaken by this office in the short term.

With the aforementioned, I appreciate your interest in the work of my portfolio and welcome your suggestions and participation. Should you wish to contact myself or a member of my office, please do not hesitate to contact me at vpeexternal@ams.ubc.ca or 604.822.2050. If you wish to speak to me in person, I can reached at my office (Rm. 3524) at the AMS Student Nest. I would be happy to answer any and all questions you may have about this report or about the work of my office moving forward.

Sincerely,

Jude Crasta
Vice-President, External Affairs
3 Global Roundtable/Ivy Leadership Summit in Boston, MA

3.1 Background & Purpose of Travel
Resultant from the experience that I acquired while serving as the Associate Vice-President, External Affairs, it became my determination to expand the profile of the AMS in the interest of representing the diverse and global interests of our student members. This action would require a significant expansion on the international network front. After being contacted by student representatives from Harvard University about the Global Roundtable, we invited their delegation over to SUDS 2015. At SUDS, the official introductions were made between the students of our two universities and it was then that the idea of having this informal working partnership was struck. We agreed to attend this summit in mid-Fall at Harvard as a central location for schools from different countries.

3.2 Summary & Outcomes
The trip was extremely informative for our delegation as it involved meeting with students from the Ivy League institutions and other US schools, along with students representing the People’s Republic of China, and the Russian Federation, including Crimea. While we had a modest sized delegation, we were able to delve into issues like demographic based access to education barriers, aboriginal issues across US & Canada, funding models and differences between different countries, LGBTQ issues etc. Our delegation consisted of myself, the Associate VP External, and the Chair of the University & External Relations Committee. While we were a small group, we were able to make the most of the meetings and conversations we had with different people from various political, social, education, etc. backgrounds.

Moving forward the Russian delegation has expressed interest in joining the AMS for SUDS 2016 and making to trip to Canada to meet with and build relationships with other SAs in the country. We are maintaining ongoing communication with the US schools and will be expecting the entirety of the Ivy League representatives to attend SUDS 2016 for building further steps in improving cross border collaboration between US & Canadian schools. Lastly, we will be establishing connections with College-100 which is a “curated network that pairs emerging leaders with current ones to address some of our generation’s most pressing concerns”, and whose representative, Saumitra Thakur, was present at the summit. This network, if expanded to Canada, could greatly benefit a lot of our students with aptitude for leadership by exposing them to networks that would foster growth and direction.

4 November Trip to Ottawa

4.1 Background & Purpose of Travel
As part of the campaign promise I made during my election, I initiated the process of improving and expanding our networks with government at the federal level, in addition to the
others. Having a new government in Ottawa provided a ripe opportunity to start creating new long term networks. I made the decision to travel along to Ottawa under the framework of the Can2020 conference as there were a lot of members from federal government in attendance from all political backgrounds. Even more promising was the fact that members of the federal cabinet, and their staff, were present at this, and related events. While my Associate was unable to accompany me due to class commitments and the need for her to pursue with prep work for the Broadway campaign, I was able to have the UNECORN Chair accompany me for this trip. We were also able to secure means for our travel through the kind support of Lev Bukhman and Sophia Haque from StudentCare who have long history of supporting advocacy and collaboration initiatives of student associations across Canada.

4.2 SUMMARY & OUTCOMES

We were able to briefly meet and/or make introductions with Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities), his staff, with staff workers within the various federal ministries, with various MPs, and with Premier Kathleen Wynne of Ontario. We were able to hear from industry experts and policy makers on issues like federal funding on public infrastructure, the importance of research universities in the promotion of the knowledge economy, political battles on funding for sustainability and climate change mitigation etc. We were also introduced to new sources of federal infrastructure funding and the various means to access those grants for projects like the Broadway Line.

The City of Vancouver, including Mayor Robertson, was present under the framework of this conference to meet with various members of the federal government to promote various issues including the Broadway Line itself, in similar fashion to ongoing meetings being held by my office. The Mayor hosted a reception in conjunction with this event for all municipal partners, federal staffers, and MPs in attendance. We were able to talk with the Mayor on a moderate number of issues including collaboration with the City of Vancouver on federal and provincial funding for projects like the Broadway Line, collaboration on tackling city-wide affordable housing, etc. He stated his appreciation of the AMS’s proactive efforts to be present at events like Can2020 where the important and essential conversations were being held.

At this event, we were also able to meet with Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould who re-stated her congratulations of the AMS celebrating its centennial and her appreciation for our efforts to work with the federal government at all possible opportunities. We were able to re-emphasize our willingness to work with the federal cabinet on issues that mattered to our members and with the federal government as a whole. As an alumna of UBC Faculty of Law she remains a strong supporter of the work the AMS has been doing to promote student issues.

Moving forward, now that the initial networks and introductions have been made with various areas of the Federal government, we will be continuing that momentum by working with UBC and the City of Vancouver to meet with cabinet in Ottawa shortly. Furthermore, we are planning to undertake a joint advocacy trip with the Dr. Martha Piper and Mr. Adriaan de Jager, Executive Director, Government and Corporate Relations at UBC to jointly advocate for increased
federal research funding for Canada research universities including indirect costs of research that are passed down to students in tuition. Furthermore, we will be partnering to continue the advocacy for the Broadway Line to UBC and move the conversation forward to achieve a tangible outcome. This will be done in tandem with the on-ground campaign that will be released soon. We will also be utilizing these networks and connections for the U15 federal advocacy week that will be taking place later this term. My office will be echoing a lot of the issues that matter to our students at both these events. This will include often ignored issues like barriers to access for minorities, First Nations communities, and other vulnerable sectors to inequity.

We hope to have these issues raised with the provincial government as well along with other NGO and SA partners. We will be continuing the expansion of our federal networks for continued benefit our members on a long term basis. This cross party promotion of priorities of the students at UBC, BC, and Canada will undoubtedly provide increasing benefit to all students and youth groups in general. We even hope to raise these issues at various degrees with the Prime Minister during our upcoming trips to the nation’s capital.

5 UN FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE/COP21 IN PARIS/LE BOURGET, FR

5.1 BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF TRAVEL

In keeping with our commitment to promote various aspects of the Broadway Line, including its function as a sustainable transit solution along a congested motorway, and in efforts to promote divestment from fossil fuels, commitment to clean energy initiatives, and our commitment to partnering with the City on national/international initiatives, my office initiated plans with UBC and the City of Vancouver to accompany the City as a part of their NGO delegation providing the youth and student advocacy perspective in various conversations with our own federal entities in attendance, with corresponding international entities, and with other Canadian partners including those in the Vancouver area. We were kind enough to receive the support for the travel of our delegation by the Office of the Vice-President, Students. Accompanying myself on this trip were the Associate VP External and the Chair of the University & External Relations Committee.

5.2 SUMMARY & OUTCOMES

We were able to accompany the City of Vancouver and other NGOs in the Cities and Regions Pavilion of the COP21 site where there amazing discussions and panels on renewable energy, transit infrastructure, etc. We were once again able to further the discussion with various governmental staff on the issues relating to sustainability that mattered to our students, whether by referendum or by assessment of the impact on student lives. We received a lot of positive feedback from various international entities on the necessity of a connector like the Broadway Line especially with the placement of UBC in such a unique geographical arrangement. We were also able to attend the Canada Night event held near Stade de France where we were able to meet with
a lot more Canadian partners from across the country including students from other universities across Canada who were present at the convention in similar capacities to ourselves. We were also able to briefly meet with Elizabeth May, Leader of the Green Party of Canada who conveyed her congratulations on the celebration of the AMS’s centennial. She re-stated her delight to see students and youth from all over Canada present at the convention to re-emphasize the role our organizations play in the future of sustainability in energy, transit, housing, etc. We were also able to once again briefly meet with Premier Kathleen Wynne of Ontario who was also happy to see our delegation present.

I was also invited by the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, and the Canadian Ambassador to France for a private reception at the Official Residence of the Ambassador of Canada along with other Canadian leaders present in Paris. Accompanying myself at this event was Marnie McGregor, Director of Intergovernmental Relations for the City of Vancouver who was gracious enough to introduce me to various individuals and entities from across Vancouver and Canada who would be of interest to the work of our Society. This reception was an amazing opportunity to connect and reflect with various other representatives from organizations on the role we all need to commit to in our various work with respect to helping mitigate climate change and promote environmental and economic sustainability for future years.

At such events, we were also able to talk extensively with individuals from the Vancouver Economic Commission on the work that they have been focused on at the municipal level and across the region. Moving forward, we will be building on these networks to potentially partner with us on the Broadway campaign. We will be moving forward with the content of the campaign and the advocacy work with the City in upcoming conversations with the municipal government. Due to the close proximity of the Paris trip to the holiday season, a lot of representatives were not able to meet for a debriefing following from the convention. We will be meeting with staff from the City in the upcoming weeks to finalize the steps moving forward from Paris with respect to Broadway and other initiatives such as the 100% renewable 2050 commitment by Vancouver City Council.

We will also be coordinating with the City and UBC on having the content obtained from Paris and other such events integrated into the upcoming meetings and trips that we will be undertaking as a part of our advocacy work.

6 Conclusion

November and December have been extremely successful months in terms of my office’s commitment to expand the AMS’s outreach beyond our immediate ecosystem. Having been able to reflect on our travel due to this report has highlighted how our travels have been able to help us advance our efforts on different fronts. Their outcomes and benefits cannot be intrinsically separated, and they represent the promotion and the advancement of the interests of our student members and those students in BC and across Canada.
I am committed on continuing the work that has led to this success and the establishment of such positive and productive working relationships. As updates develop, I will intimate Council and the Society as a whole with the progress of the work we are performing. The biggest beacon of our progress will the evolution and the expansion of the upcoming, long term Broadway campaign. Furthermore, in accordance with my campaign promise to bring the topic of affordable housing options and regulations surrounding student housing, I have breached the topic and have made significant head way in raising the issue with municipal leaders and those in the provincial government. This issue shall be a key focus in many upcoming meetings that my office will be undertaking. After speaking to various student and non-student entities, I have committed the work of the remainder of my term to also include the often ignored topic of First Nations access to education at the provincial and federal level. This is a very strategic time to discuss the issue as the nation is currently engaged in the implementation of the 94 recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. While occupying the unceded and ancestral territory of Musqueam people, I strongly believe it to be the duty of my office to pay back the debt of this favour by supporting our First Nations communities and their youth in the removal and mitigation of barriers to accessing post-secondary education.

I appreciate the attention of our student body and councilors in the work of my office by following up on this report. As time progresses I shall be making further such reports and updates to keep our membership appraised of the work that is being performed for the benefit and promotion of our fellow students. As always, I welcome any input from our members on issues to be raised, on strategies for tackling the issues already mentioned, for the clarification of content being reported or promoted, etc. Should you find yourself with any questions regarding this report or the general work of my office, please do not hesitate to contact me directly via email at vpexternal@ams.ubc.ca or visit me at Rm. 3524 in the AMS Student Nest at your convenience or by appointment.